

Issue Brief – Youth Substance Abuse Treatment Services

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

DHS-09-10

YOUTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT SERVICES

The Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH) requests funding of \$706,200 in General Fund to develop a Youth Substance Abuse Treatment Initiative. Although this initiative seems worthy, without significant outcome measures to support the request, the Analyst does not recommend funding at this time. It is the recommendation of the Analyst that the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health evaluate all of their programs within the division and reallocate resources as needed for this initiative and request funding in future years once the program has proven outcome measures.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this program is to provide early intervention through education, outreach and treatment services for at risk youth with substance abuse and/or mental health issues.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Utah is experiencing a growing number of youth with alcohol and/or drug use. In 2007, 7,402 juveniles were referred to Juvenile Court because of drug or alcohol related problems which is a 14 percent increase over 2005. In addition, 65 to 70 percent of the youth entering the juvenile justice system meet the criteria for at least one mental health disorder. Other statistics show that over 86,000 youth in Utah have tried alcohol and 23,000 binge drink. Left untreated, adolescents with mental health or substance abuse problems become adults involved in the criminal justice system. The current program capacity is 2,137 with approximately 16,000 youth in need of substance abuse treatment services.

Treatment Initiative

The DSAMH would like to expand their substance abuse treatment program to develop a “family-driven” system. The focus of this initiative is a team approach to coordinate substance abuse and mental health services by providing a full continuum of treatment based on individual needs.

This program will develop individual treatment plans for each youth including working with the family and schools to ensure recovery. The goals of this initiative are as follows:

1. Reduce alcohol and drug use through early intervention, education and treatment services;
2. Reduce the negative consequences of alcohol and drug use (criminal and social behavior);
3. Increase community involvement (family and schools);
4. Improve social functioning; and
5. Increase school attendance and performance.

These services will be provided by contractors through the competitive bid process in four areas of the state, two of which will be in rural communities.

RECOMMENDATION

Although this initiative seems worthy, without significant outcome measures to support the request, the Analyst does not recommend funding at this time. It is the recommendation of the Analyst that the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health evaluate all of their programs within the division and reallocate resources as needed for this initiative and request funding in future years once the program has proven outcome measures.